

## Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EURE-00 AID-05 CEA-01 CIAE-00 COME-00

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ETRD, PFOR, EEC

SUBJECT: EC FOREIGN MINS COUNCIL, MARCH 1-2: COMMUNITY

FAILS TO AGREE ON TROPICAL PRODUCTS OFFER

1. DESPITE SOME THREE HOURS OF DISCUSSION, THE EC FOREIGN MINISTERS, AT THEIR COUNCIL MEETING HELD IN BRUSSELS ON MARCH 1-2, WERE UNABLE TO AGREE UPON FINAL DETAILS REGARDING THEIR TROPICAL PRODUCTS OFFER. PERMDEL AND COUNCIL SOURCES HERE TOLD US THE ITALIAN DELEGATION DID NOT, DESPITE PRESSURE, DROP ITS RESERVATION REGARDING CONCESSIONS TO BE MADE BY THE COMMUNITY COVERING TOBACCO. THE ITALIANS APPEARED WILLING, HOWEVER, TO CONTINUE DISCUSSION ON THEIR RESERVATIONS ON THE PORTION OF THE COMMUNITY'S OFFER COVERING EDIBLE FATS AND OILS. THIS SUBJECT WAS NOT PRESSED BECAUSE, AS EC COMMISSION VICE PRESIDENT SOAMES, REFLECTING THE VIEW OF A NUMBER OF DELEGATIONS, TOLD THE PRESS, RATHER THAN HAVING A BAD OFFER ON TIME, HE WOULD PREFER TO WORK FOR A GOOD OFFER (I.E., INCLUDING TOBACCO) A BIT LATER. HE ADDED THAT THE US, CANADA, AND THE JAPANESE HAD ALREADY MADE THEIR OFFERS, AND HE WANTED THE COMMUNITY'S OFFER TO BE "AS LEAST AS GOOD."

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2. A UK TRADE MINISTRY SOURCE TOLD US THAT IN HIS VIEW THE ITALIAN PROBLEM WAS POLITICAL IN NATURE. THIS SOURCE NOTED THAT ITALIAN PRODUCTION WOULD NOT BE HARMED BY THE PROPOSED CONCESSIONS.

3. WE WERE TOLD THAT, DURING THE COUNCIL DISCUSSION, A QUESTION ALSO AROSE REGARDING AN UNDERTAKING GIVEN THE GREEKS IN CONNECTION WITH THEIR ASSOCIATION AGREEMENT WITH THE COMMUNITY WHEREBY THE COMMUNITY IS OBLIGATED TO CONSULT WITH THE GREEK GOVERNMENT ON ANY MEASURES WHICH WOULD HAVE THE EFFECT OF INCREASING TOBACCO IMPORTS AT PREFERENTIAL DUTY RATES IN EXCESS OF 44,000 TONS PER YEAR. WHETHER OR NOT THIS OBLIGATION TO CONSULT WITH THE GREEK GOVERNMENT GIVES THE GREEKS A "VETO" OVER ANY COMMUNITY TOBACCO OFFER IS NOT CLEAR. GREEK AND ITALIAN OFFICIALS, SPEAKING TO THE PRESS FOLLOWING THE COUNCIL MEETING, SAID THAT IN THEIR VIEW THE COMMUNITY COULD TAKE NO ACTION IF THE GREEKS EXPRESSED RESERVATIONS DURING THE CONSULTATIONS IN BRUSSELS. (COUNCIL SOURCES CONFIRM THAT THE COMMUNITY'S PROPOSALS HAVE BEEN GIVEN TO THE GREEKS AND, WHILE NO FORMAL RESPONSE HAS AS YET BEEN RECEIVED, THE GREEKS HAVE INDICATED THAT THE COMMUNITY OFFER WOULD CAUSE "PROBLEMS" FOR THEIR TRADE.) UK SOURCES, ON THE OTHERHAND, HAVE SAID ANY GREEK OBJECTIONS WOULD NOT BE ALLOWED TO BLOCK A COMMUNITY OFFER.

4. THE COMMUNITY'S TROPICAL PRODUCTS OFFER HAS BEEN RETURNED TO THE EC COMMITTEE OF PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVES (COREPER) FOR FURTHER STUDY. IF AGREEMENT CAN BE REACHED AT THE COREPER LEVEL, MEMBER STATE APPROVAL WILL BE SOUGHT VIA WRITTEN PROCEDURE. SHOULD IT NOT BE POSSIBLE TO REMOVE THE ITALIAN OBJECTIONS, AS COUNCIL SOURCES THINK LIKELY, THE MATTER WILL BE BROUGHT UP AT THE NEXT EC FOREIGN MINISTERS COUNCIL WHICH WILL BE HELD IN LUXEMBOURG APRIL 5-6. HINTON

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